

Yesterday I gave myself a gift – I dumped my cable TV carrier. What I actually did was down grade my service to basic cable. Ridding myself of the baggage of most of the garbage on TV today, I still can view my three favorite PBS channels and CSPAN when I choose. I feel so free. In light of the Sinclair Broadcast Group order to its 62 stations to air without commercials on October 23rd “Stolen Honor: Wounds That Never Heal”, a propaganda film against John Kerry’s activist role against the Vietnam War, I know I made the right decision. This film, with its shoddy research and extremist’s position, is only one of many examples of Sinclair’s hard ball tactics to promote its conservative agenda.

Will the film make a difference? Who knows and that’s not the important question. The important question deals with fairness and integrity in broadcasting. When a media broadcasting company president can thwart law because he chooses to do it, and he is willing to pay the meager fine imposed by the FCC as a consequence, our voice as citizens is diminished.

Sinclair Broadcasting’s decision to force their stations to air an anti-Kerry documentary days before the election is a clear example of the dangers of media consolidation.

Sinclair uses the public airwaves free of charge, and is obligated by law to serve the public interest. But when large companies control the airwaves, we get more of what’s good for the bottom line and less of what we need for our democracy. Instead of something produced at “News Central” far away, it’s more important that we see real people from our own communities and more substantive news about issues that matter.

Sinclair’s actions show why we need to strengthen media ownership rules, not weaken them. They show why the license renewal process needs to involve more than a returned postcard. Thank you.